

THE
DEFENDERS

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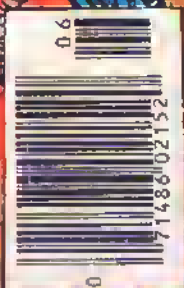
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THE DEFENDERS™

**PLANT-MAN
STRIKES!**

FEATURING THE
**NEW RED
GUARDIAN!**

GARDEN OF EVIL!



The mysterious **DR. STRANGE!** The vibrant **VALKYRIE!** The high-flying **NIGHTHAWK!** The incredible **HULK!** Evil-doers **TREMBLE** at the names—for these four form the crux of the greatest **NDN-TEAM** in history, heroes called together only when the need arises—to battle **MENACES** that threaten the security—or the very **LIFE**—of the planet **EARTH!**

Stan Lee **PRESENTS: THE DYNAMIC DEFENDERS!**

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A GARDEN OF EARTHLY DEMISE!

OF LATE, THE BRAIN OF KYLE (NIGHTHAWK) RICHMOND, DETACHED FROM ITS NATIVE SKULL, HAS BEEN TOSSED FROM HAND-TO-HAND, SEEMINGLY WITH AS LITTLE CARE AS MIGHT BE ACCORDED A FRAYED, PEELING SOFTBALL.



HIS
BODY
HAS PLAYED
HOST TO
OTHER
BRAINS.
OTHER
SOULS.

AND ALL THE WHILE, HIS MIND,
THAT SELF-CONTAINED FACULTY
DEPRIVED OF SENSORY INPUT, YET
ABLE TO THINK, TO REMEMBER—
HIS MIND HAS PLAYED AND
REPLAYED HIS PAST BEFORE
ITS OWN ALL-SEEING EYE LIKE
AN ETERNAL LOOP OF OLD
B-MOVIES.

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME
FOR THE FINAL
SHOWING...

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"IT ENDED WITH THE HEADMEN...
ARTHUR NAGAN'S *SIMIAN* HAND...
THE HYPNOTIC GLEAM ON THE EDGE
OF A DESCENDING SCALPEL."



"A
SNICKER,
A SLICE,
THEN...
NOWHERE-
LAND."

"SEARCHING OUT MEMORIES...
CLUES TO HOW I'D LOST MY
SENSES..."



"I GOT TO WATCH AND *FEEL*
AGAIN (AND AGAIN AND AGAIN)...
MY MOTHER'S *DEATH*. THAT
OPENED THE *FLOODGATES*."

"BOARDING SCHOOL: WHERE I
LEARNED TO RELEASE MY
MASCULINE, AGGRESSIVE TENDENCIES,
LEARNED THAT AND LITTLE ELSE,
ALL BECAUSE I *CRYED* WHEN DAD
DUMPED ME THERE ON HIS WAY
FROM THE FUNERAL BACK TO THE
WORLD OF HIGH FINANCE."



CRY-BABY,
CRY-BABY!

"AGGRESSION WORKED
BETTER THAN TEARS OF
FRUSTRATION... EVEN ON
THE *PRINCIPAL*, WHO
VOWED TO KEEP ME
OUT OF *COLLEGE*."



"BUT DAD'S *MONEY*-- WHICH KEPT ME
SAFELY ENSCONCED IN THAT OLD
BUZZARD'S *PRISON*-- PAVED MY
WAY INTO *ACADEME*, AS WELL."

"I GOT INTO *COLLEGE*... I GOT A
CAR... I GOT A *GIRL*... I GOT
DRUNK... SHE GOT *DEAD*..."



"...AND, FINALLY, I GOT THE *BOOT*."



"THE ALTERNATIVE TO
COLLEGE IN THOSE DAYS
WAS AN EDUCATION IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA."

"I WAS ALMOST LOOKING FORWARD
TO DEATH IN *NAM*, BUT THAT
WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN TOO *EASY*, EVEN
THE *DRAFT BOARD* COULDN'T ALTER
MY LIFE-PATTERN OF *REJECTION*."



SELECTIVE
SERVICE
LOCAL NO. 1

U.S. ARMY PHYSICAL
REPORT

4-F: A
HEART
MURMUR.

"THEN DAD DIED--NATCH--
BEFORE I COULD PAY HIM *BACK*
FOR ALL HE'D *DONE* FOR ME.
AND THERE I WAS--AN EMOTIONAL
TODDLER WITH A MOUNTAIN OF
MONEY IN MY CRIB!"



"THAT RESPONSIBILITY I DUMPED IN
PENNYWORTH'S AMPLY ABLE LAP."

"I FIXATED ON MY HEART MURMUR--
THE MOST EASILY IDENTIFIABLE
SPECK IN MY DUST STORM OF
IMPERFECTIONS. WITH THE
HELP OF A SPACE-TIME JOCKEY
CALLED THE *GRANDMASTER*,
REPAIRS WERE EFFECTED."



"THERE WAS A **MITCH** IN THE DEAL, OF COURSE, FOR A WHILE, I HAD TO PLAY THE **HEAVY** - AS ONE OF THE GRANDMASTER'S **SQUADRON SINISTER**. NOT THAT THE VILLAIN BIT WASN'T **FUN** ON OCCASION. ...!



"BUT THE SECRET YEN TO WEAR THE WHITE HAT WON OUT. IN TIME, I JOINED THE **DEFENDERS**."



"AS A DIVERSION, I HAD MY **RICH BRAT** IMAGE TO LIVE UP TO -- PAINTING THE TOWN WITH A NEW FACE EVERY WEEK LIKE **CLOCKWORK**."



"ONLY **TRISH STARR** -- OF ALL THOSE STARLETS AND MODELS -- EVER GOT TO ME, TOUCHED ME UNDER THE SKIN."

"AND, TRUE TO FORM, **THAT** BURGEONING ROMANCE WAS SHOT TO BLAZES WHEN HER UNCLE **EGGHEAD** EQUIPPED MY CAR WITH A **TNT WHOOPIE CUSHION**."



"GUESS IT'S HARD TO TAKE THE LOSS OF AN **ARM** WITH A SENSE OF **HUMOR**. TRISH TOOK A POWDER, NOTHING PERSONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND. SHE JUST THOUGHT I OUGHT TO HOLD MY **OWN** HAND FOR AWHILE."



"BUT THERE WERE **NEW** DIVERSIONS -- LIKE PENNYSWORTH FINANCING THE **SONS OF THE SERPENT** WITH MY DOUGH. THAT WAS A **GOOD** YOK."



"BY THE TIME WE DEFENDERS HAD ZAPPED INTO THE **FUTURE** AND TEAMED UP WITH THE **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**, I WAS ...



"...LET'S JUST SAY, **'DISCREETED'**, HUH?"

"WHEN WE GOT BACK, MY THOUGHTS TURNED TO **TRISH** AGAIN WHEN...



"IT **BEGAN** RIGHT WHERE IT **ENDED**."

"IS IT EVER GONNA BE **OVER**...?"



"MR. RICHMOND? CAN YOU **SPEAK**...?"

NO, HE CANNOT, FOR THOUGH HIS **BODY** HAS MADE THE NECESSARY READJUSTMENT, HIS **MIND** BOTH **REBELS** AND **REJOICES** AT ITS EYES THAT CAN **SEE**, HANDS THAT CAN **FEEL**...



HE IS PARALYZED-- WITH BOTH **DELIGHT**... AND **DISBELIEF**.

THEN DO NOT ATTEMPT IT, YOU ARE STILL FEELING THE EFFECT OF THE **ANESTHETIC**. IT IS TRANSITORY. HAVE NO **FEAR**.

ARE YOU AWARE OF WHERE YOU'VE **BEEN** THESE PAST DAYS, MR. RICHMOND? OR SHALL I **RELATE** THE STORY TO YOU?



KYLE NODS **AMBIGUOUSLY**

YOUR BRAIN, MR. RICHMOND, WAS **SURGICALLY REMOVED** FROM--

QUIET, LADY! WE'RE TAKIN' YOU **OUTTA** HERE! TELL PRETTY BOY TO **STAY IN BED**, AN' HE'LL STILL BE AROUND **TOMORROW!**



LITTLE NEED FOR THAT LAST ADMONITION. KYLE'S LINGERING DROWSINESS, HIS UNCERTAINTY OF HIS VERY **EXISTENCE**, MAKE FOR AN **INOPERATIVE** SUPERHERO. IN FACT, HE NOTICES THAT HIS VISION IS **HAZY**, SLOWED, AND, MORE THAN LIKELY, **HALLUCINATORY**.

BEFORE HIS DIMMING DILATED EYES, THE WOMAN PERFORMS A **BALLET** OF **AESTHETICALLY PLEASING** MOVES. PRESENTS A **STUDY** IN **GRACE** AND **STRENGTH**. AN **UNUSUAL** DOCTOR, THIS LADY...



WHAT WITH HER **UNAVISTAKEABLY FOREIGN** ACCENT (CAN HE HEAR, TOO??), HER **SUPPLE** FORM, AND APPARENT **FIGHTING SKILL**.

ALTOGETHER, A **PLEASANT** SIGHT TO CARRY HIM BACK TO **DREAMLAND**...



NOT UNTIL THE ANESTHETIC CURTAIN PARTS AGAIN WILL KYLE LEARN THAT HER NAME IS...

DR. TANYA BELINSKY... WISHES TO REMAIN IN THE U.S. FOR A TIME.

YOU WISH THAT, TOO, DO YOU NOT?



YES. DR. BELINSKY SHOULD REMAIN IN THE UNITED STATES FOR A TIME.

EXCELLENT. I FELT SURE, GIVEN THE PROPER INDUCEMENT, YOU WOULD AGREE.



SUDDENLY...

DR. STRANGE-- THERE'S SOME KIND OF RUCKUS GOING ON IN MR. RICHMOND'S ROOM!

SOME GUYS BROKE IN-- ATTACKED HIM--!

THANK YOU. I'LL BE ALONG AT ONCE...

... AFTER I'VE RELEASED TANYA'S DIPLOMATIC OBSTRUCTIONS FROM THEIR TRANCE.



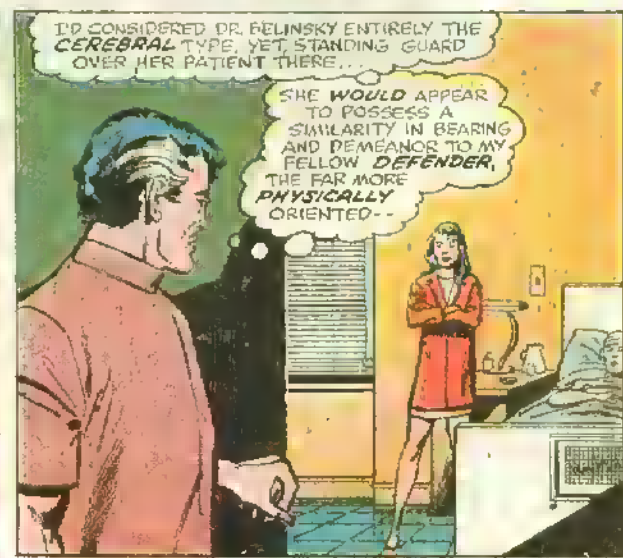
OFFICER-- WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE?

LOOKS LIKE THESE JOKERS TRIED TO PUT THE SNATCH ON RICHMOND.



FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE LADY DOCTOR-- THE LITTLE RUSSIAN GAL-- TOOK ALL THREE OF 'EM BY HER LONESOME.

MOST... INTRIGUING.



I'D CONSIDERED DR. BELINSKY ENTIRELY THE CEREBRAL TYPE, YET, STANDING GUARD OVER HER PATIENT THERE...

SHE WOULD APPEAR TO POSSESS A SIMILARITY IN BEARING AND DEMEANOR TO MY FELLOW DEFENDER, THE FAR MORE PHYSICALLY ORIENTED--



VALKYRIE?
THAT'S YOUR
NAME?
VALKYRIE WHAT?



MERELY... VALKYRIE, I'VE
NO SURNAME.

AND NO ADDRESS, NO
PHONE NUMBER, NO
PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT--
NO IDENTIFICATION
AT ALL!



OKAY, PRINT 'ER AN
BOOK 'ER! SHE DOESN'T
WANNA CO-OPERATE--
SWELL! WE GOT WAYS
TO FIND OUT WHAT WE
NEED TO KNOW!



SHOUL'D A COME
CLEAN, KID, YOU'RE
IN **BIG** TROUBLE NOW,
MIGHTA GONE EASIER
ON YA IF...

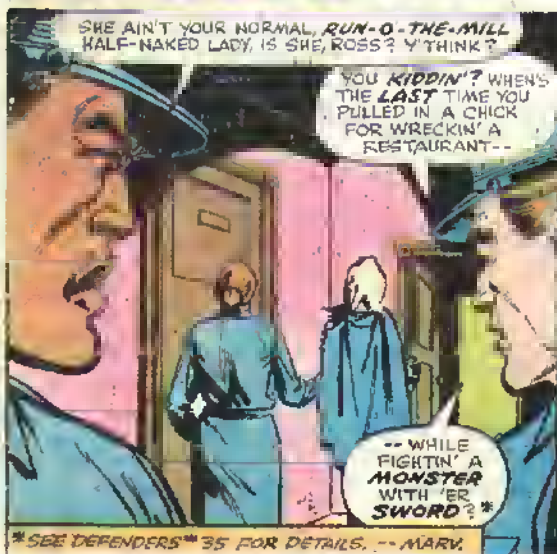
BUT... THERE
WAS... NO
MORE TO
TELL...

SURE,
KID.



GOTTA HAND YA OVER TO
OFFICER CRUM NOW...!

HMPH... SHE'S
HALF-NAKED!
HERE, SWEETS--
YOU CAN SLIP
INTA **THESE**.



SHE AIN'T YOUR NORMAL, **RUN-O-THE-MILL**
HALF-NAKED LADY, IS SHE, ROSS? Y' THINK?

YOU **KIDDIN'**? WHEN'S
THE **LAST** TIME YOU
PULLED IN A CHICK
FOR **WRECKIN'** A
RESTAURANT--

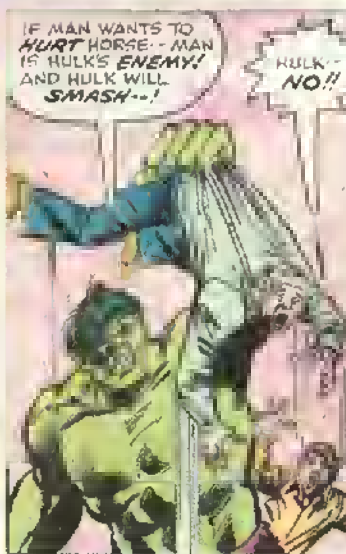
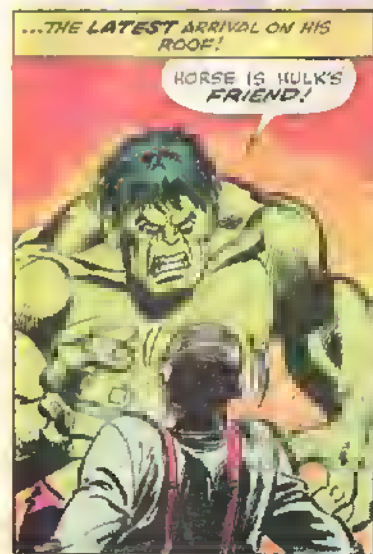
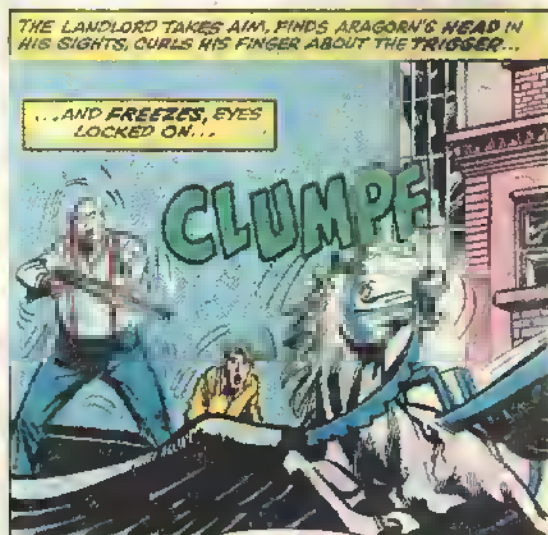
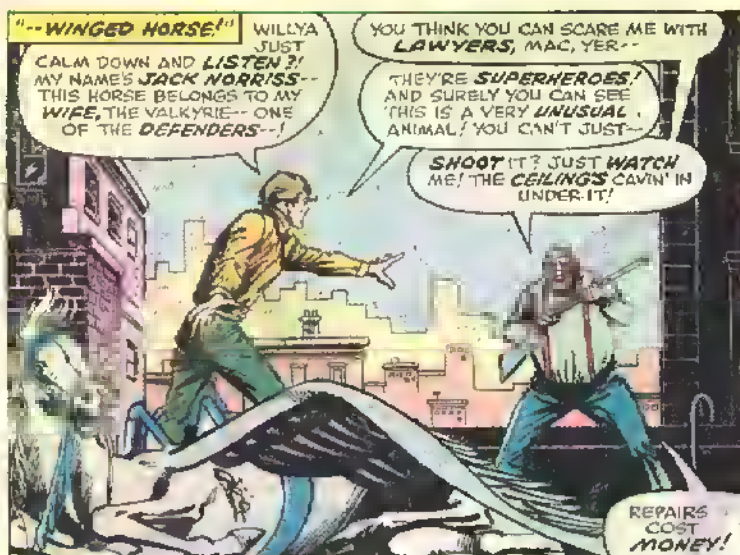
-- WHILE
FIGHTIN' A
MONSTER
WITH 'ER
SWORD? *

* SEE DEFENDERS # 35 FOR DETAILS. -- MARV.



C'MON, YOU TWO-- QUIT
MOONIN' OVER THE BROAD!
I GOT **ANOTHER** GOOD
ONE FOR YA!

SOME LANDLORD IN
MIDTOWN'S GOT A
MANIAC ON HIS ROOF--
SAYS THE GUY WON'T
GET DOWN 'TIL WE
SEND A **VET** FOR HIS



FRESH FROM HIS CONFRONTATION WITH OMEGA, ELECTRO, AND THE POLICE, THE GREEN BEHEMOTH IS SIMPLY IN NO MOOD TO LISTEN.

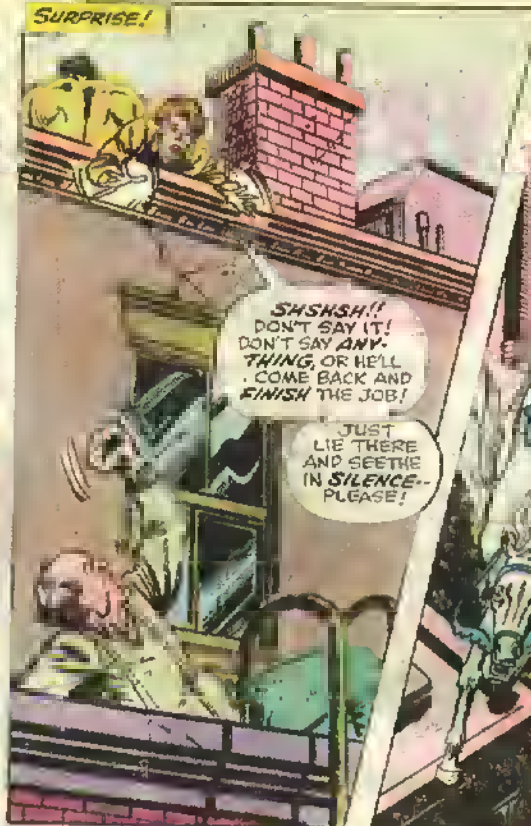
SURPRISE!

"AND WHEN THE COPS ARRIVE-- TELL 'EM I'VE FOUND OTHER TRANSPORTATION TO THE VET!"



TREMBLING AT WHAT HE KNOWS HE WILL SEE, MORRIS PEERS TENTATIVELY OVER THE PARAPET.

*OMEGA 2. -- MARY.



SASHSH!! DON'T SAY IT! DON'T SAY ANYTHING, OR HE'LL COME BACK AND FINISH THE JOB!

JUST LIE THERE AND SEETHE IN SILENCE-- PLEASE!



MEANWHILE, IN A HOSPITAL CAFETERIA, DRS. STRANGE AND BELINSKY CONFER OVER COFFEE...

...AND YOU'LL BE MY GUEST DURING YOUR STAY.

HOW YOU PERSUADED KASLOV TO LET ME REMAIN IN YOUR COUNTRY IS BEYOND ME, BUT--

CELESTIAL MIND CONTROL-- BIGGER FAD THAN ROCK'N'ROLL-- READ ALL ABOUT IT!

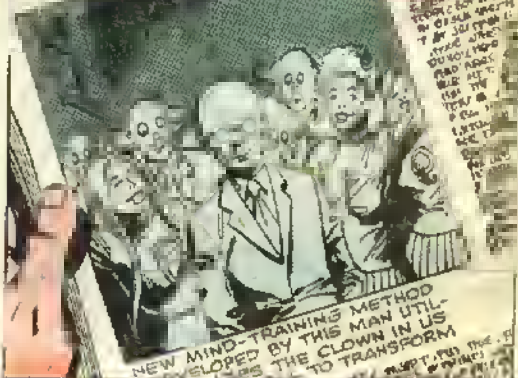
THIS MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO YOU.

I'LL TAKE A PAPER, SON.

"CELESTIAL MIND CONTROL"? IT SOUNDS... RATHER OMINOUS.

BOZOS INTO HEROES

IT IS.



NEW MIND-TRAINING METHOD DEVELOPED BY THIS MAN UTIL-
LIES TO TRANSFORM
BOZOS INTO HEROES



IT'S THE MASS MOVEMENT TOWARD ANYONE PROMISING **INSTANT POWER**--BE IT MENTAL OR PHYSICAL--WHICH DISTURBS ME.

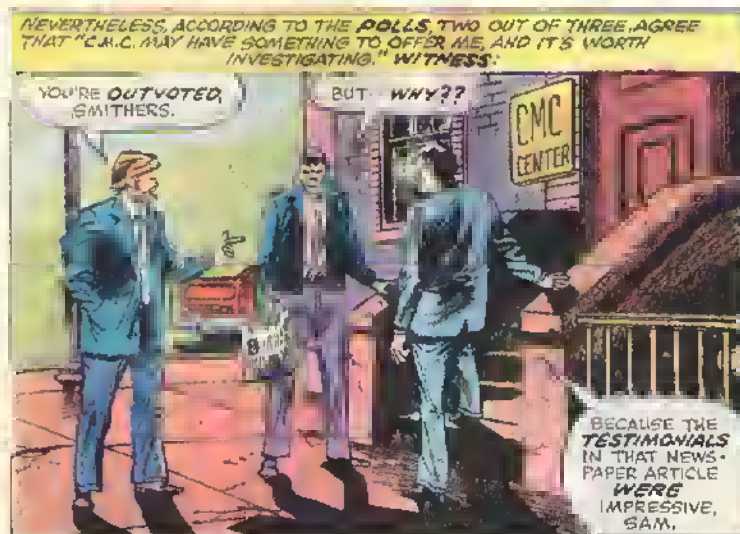
PEOPLE SEEM TOO WILLING TO BLINDLY FOLLOW THE **FASHION**--TO RELINQUISH EVEN CONTROL OF THEIR **THOUGHTS**!

YES, I AM **FAMILIAR** WITH THE SYNDROME.

NEBULON, THE CELESTIAL MAN!



AND I **ENVY** THE CALM WITH WHICH YOU MAY **APPROACH** IT, DOCTOR... UNAWARE OF THE PARTICULARS... UNAWARE THAT THE **FIGUREHEAD** OF THIS MOVEMENT IS NUMBERED AMONG THE MOST POWERFUL BEINGS IN THE **UNIVERSE**!



NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO THE **POLLS**, TWO OUT OF THREE AGREE THAT "C.M.C. MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER ME, AND IT'S WORTH INVESTIGATING." **WITNESS**:

YOU'RE **OUTVOTED**, SMITHERS.

BUT--**WHY??**

BECAUSE THE **TESTIMONIALS** IN THAT NEWS-PAPER ARTICLE **WERE** IMPRESSIVE, SAM.



AND IT MAKES SENSE--IF HE CAN TURN BOZOS INTO **HEROES**, WHY NOT SLOBS LIKE US INTO EFFECTIVE **VILLAINS**?!
RRING



COME IN, GENTLEMEN, WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

WELCOME! WELCOME, WELCOME, WELCOME!!

DO STEP INSIDE AND **INTRODUCE** YOURSELVES.



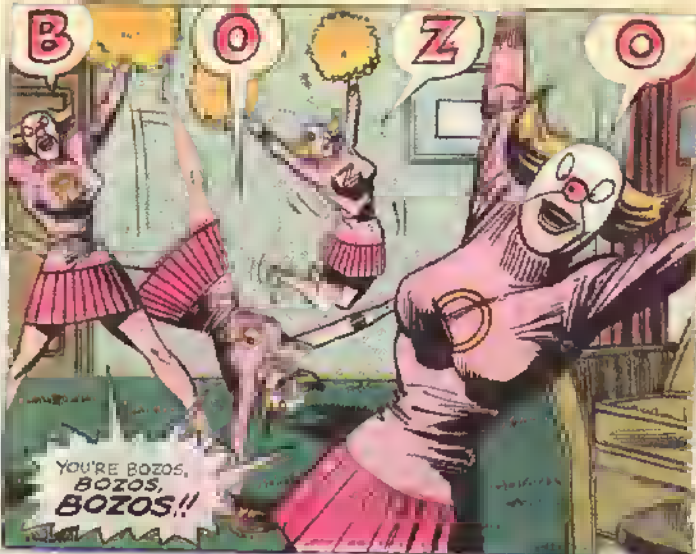
WHAT? I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE WAITING FOR US?

OH, WE'RE WAITING FOR **EVERYONE**... AND WITH OPEN **ARMS**. THAT DOESN'T MEAN--

ALL RIGHT, I UNDERSTAND. I'M ALEX GENTRY. MY FRIENDS ARE SAM SMITHERS AND LEOPOLD STRYKE. WE--

WRONG! TELL THEM, GIRLS-- TELL THEM THEIR NAMES!

HUH...?



YOU'RE BOZOS, BOZOS, BOZOS!!

THAT'S IT-- THAT *SINKS* IT! I'M NOT PUTTIN' UP WITH THIS! YOU TURKEYS *STAY* IF YOU WANT! I'M LEAVIN'--

PITY, BUT BE CALM, GENTLEMEN. HE'LL COME BACK. THEY ALL DO.

OUTSIDE...

I CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE GUYS! WHY'D I FIGURE A PRISON STRETCH WOULD WISE 'EM UP?

THEY'LL STILL TAG AFTER ANYBODY WITH A SMOOTH LINE!

SO, OKAY-- LET 'EM! I DON'T NEED 'EM! I KNOW WHAT I WANT, AN' I KNOW HOW TO GET IT!

WHILE THEY WERE SO FASCINATED WITH THE FREKIN'...

--I LOOKED AT PAGE TWO O' THAT PAPER-- I SAW THE IMPORTANT STORY-- I SAW WHERE THE MONEY WAS--!

YEAH WHO NEEDS THEM?!

WE'LL SHOW 'EM-- WE'LL SHOW THE WHOLE WORLD A THING OR TWO--

--WON'T WE, PAL?

ELSEWHERE, EXHAUSTED, VIRTUALLY SOMNAMBULANT, UNABLE TO RESPOND EVEN TO THE OFFER OF A FREE PHONE CALL, THE WOMAN WARRIOR IS USHERED INTO HER NEW DWELLING PLACE.

A LITTLE STRUNG-OUT, AIN'T SHE?

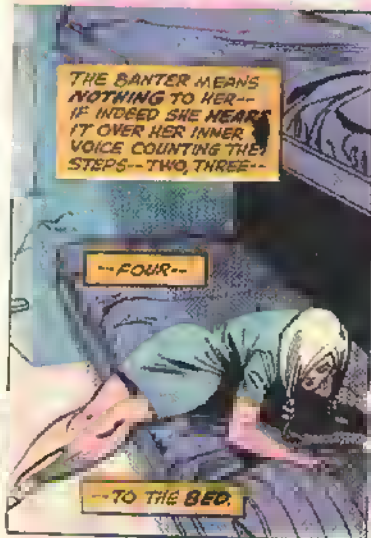
SHE'LL BE PERFECT COMPANY FOR YOU DEGENERATES.



THE BANTER MEANS NOTHING TO HER-- IF INDEED SHE HEARS IT OVER HER INNER VOICE COUNTING THE STEPS-- TWO, THREE--

--FOUR--

--TO THE BED.



WAITAMINIT, BLONDIE--UP!! THAT'S THE KID'S BUNK!



THUMP

IT'S OKAY, HONEST! SHE'S SO TIRED--!

YOU CLAM UP!

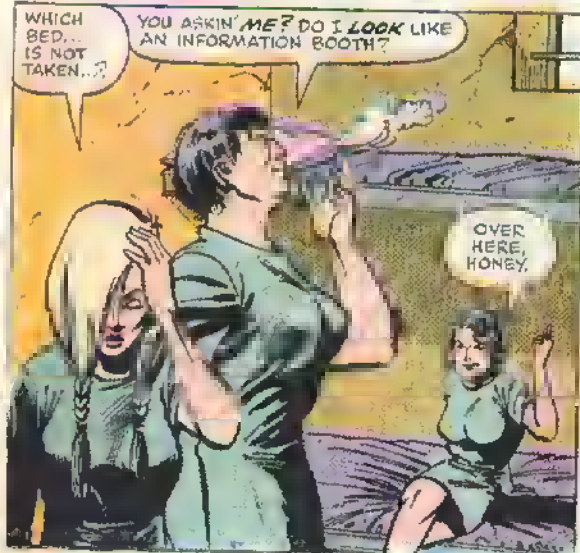


YOU DUNNO WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU, I'LL HANDLE THIS.

WHICH BED... IS NOT TAKEN...?

YOU ASKIN' ME? DO I LOOK LIKE AN INFORMATION BOOTH?

OVER HERE, HONEY.



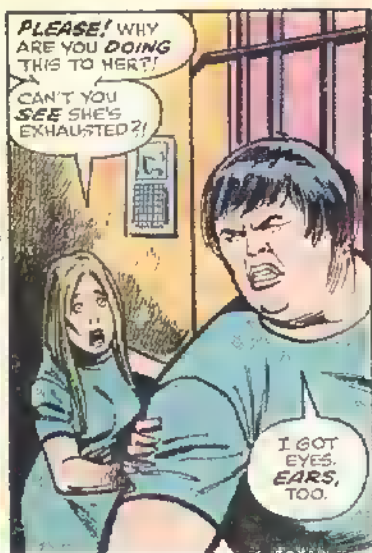
UH... HOLO IT, SWEETHEART.

WE BELIEVE IN BEIN' SOCIABLE AROUND HERE. YOU CAN'T JUST WALK INTO SOMEBODY'S CELL AN' SACK OUT.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHATCHA IN FOR?

I... DO NOT CARE... TO DISCUSS IT...





PLEASE! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO HER?!

CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S EXHAUSTED?!

I GOT EYES, EARS, TOO.



AN' I COULDA SWORN I TOLD YOU TO BUTT OUT!

SMACK



NOW, HOW 'BOUT IT? WE GONNA HAVE SOME CONVERSATION HERE--?

OR AM I GONNA TEACH YOU SOME MANNERS?

LET... GO... OF... ME...

ABRUPTLY, THE BULL-LIKE WOMAN IS SHOCKED TO FIND HERSELF HELD AT ARM'S LENGTH BY A "FRAIL" HALF HER WEIGHT.

IT TAKES ONLY SECONDS OF PRESSURE ON THE CAROTID ARTERIES BEFORE THE BRAIN DEPRIVED OF OXYGEN, BEGINS TO BLACKEN.

I DIDN'T EVEN SEE HER MOVE!!



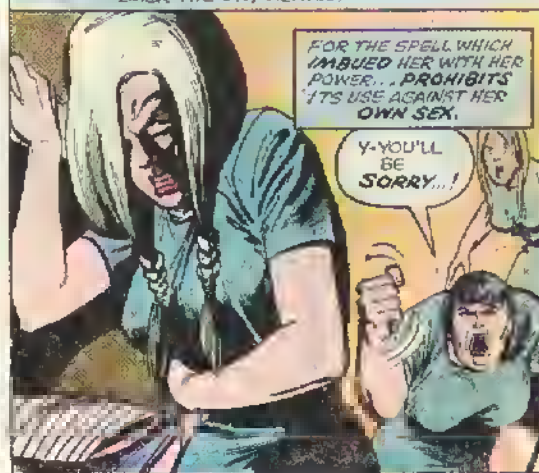
I'VE NO WISH... TO EMPLOY... PHYSICAL VIOLENCE...

I'VE NO WISH... TO RELATE TO YOU... AT ALL...

DO NOT... FORCE ME... I SHAN'T BE... SO LENIENT AGAIN...!

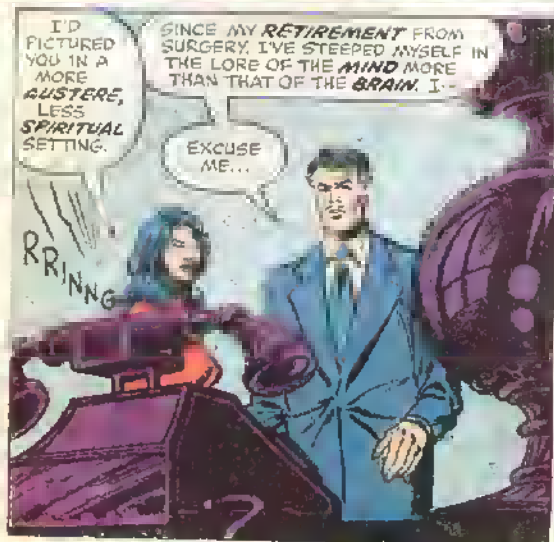
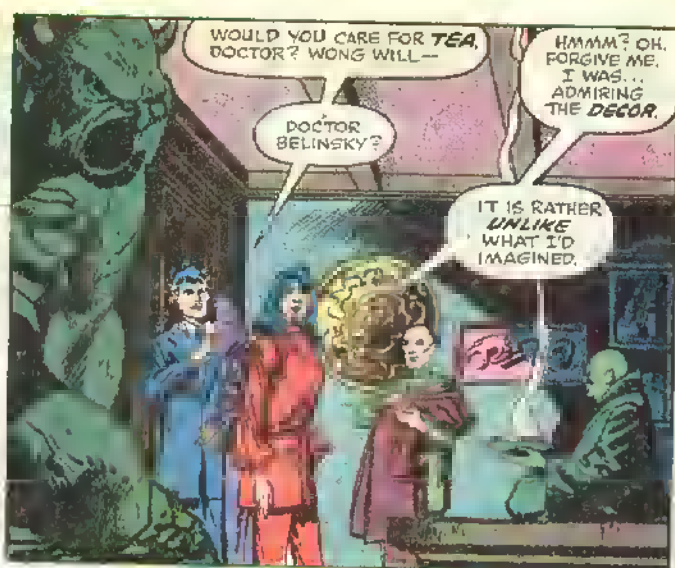


SHE TURNS AWAY, THEN, HER STRENGTH DEPLETED NOT ONLY BY FATIGUE... BUT ALSO BY ITS MYSTICAL LIMITATIONS. SHE CLUTCHES AT HER GUT, FIGHTING BACK THE DRY HEAVES.



FOR THE SPELL WHICH IMBUE HER WITH HER POWER... PROHIBITS ITS USE AGAINST HER OWN SEX.

Y-YOU'LL BE SORRY...!



BUT THE MYSTIC MASTER PAYS NO HEED. HIS THOUGHTS, HIS ENERGIES FLOW OUT IN OTHER DIRECTIONS, SEEKING OTHER MINDS...



HE REACHES VALKYRIE AS WOULD A DREAM, EPHEMERALLY DISTURBING BUT FAILING TO INTERRUPT HER DEEP SLUMBER.

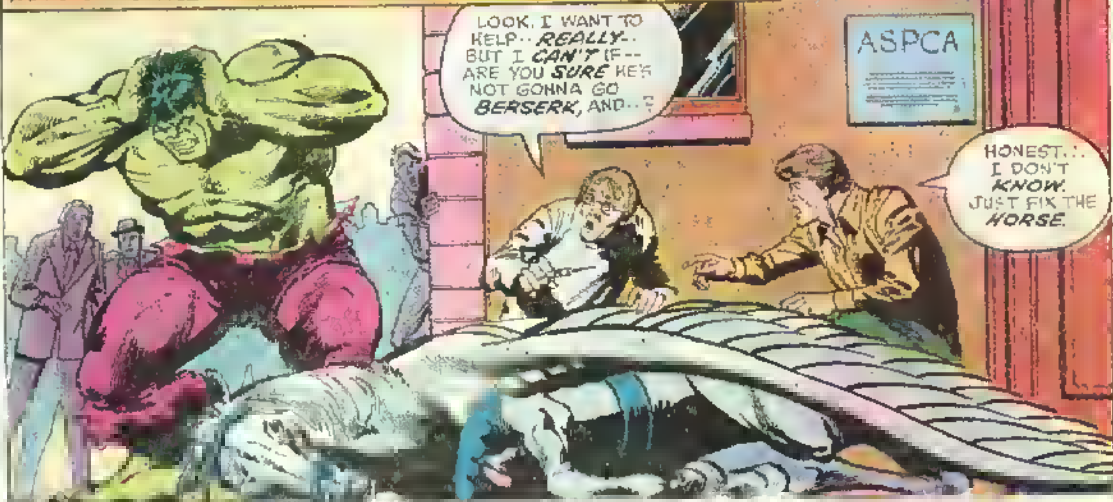


AND UPON PENETRATING THE NULKS PRIMITIVE CONSCIOUSNESS, HE IS GREETED NOT MERELY WITH RESISTANCE... BUT OUTRIGHT BELLIGERENCE!



GET OUT!!

NO PSYCHIC SPACE REMAINS IN THE JADE GIANT'S HEAD FOR ANOTHER CONCERN.



LOOK, I WANT TO HELP... REALLY... BUT I CAN'T IF-- ARE YOU SURE HE'S NOT GONNA GO BERSERK, AND--?

HONEST... I DON'T KNOW. JUST FIX THE HORSE.



... FUTILE. I SHALL HAVE TO DEAL WITH KYLE'S DISAPPEARANCE QUITE ALONE, IT SEEMS.

ODD THAT VINE CLIMBING THE HOSPITAL WALL... I'M CERTAIN IT WAS NOT THERE...



... EARLIER...

BY THE VISHAN--

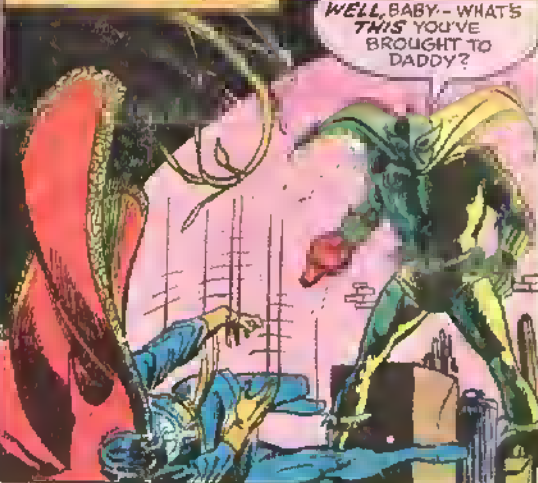
THE EXCLAMATION GOES UNFINISHED... AS THE PLANT'S CONSTRUCTOR-LIKE GRIP STEALS THE SORCERER'S BREATH AWAY.

LEAPING, TWISTING,
WRITHING, GROWING--



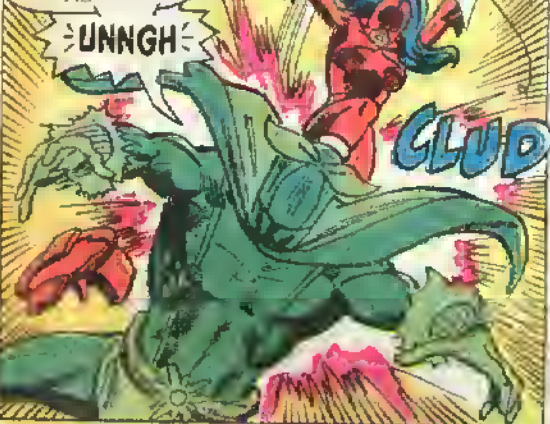
--THE WEIRDLY
ANIMATED STALK
CARRIES THE MAGE
UPWARD AND OVER
THE HOSPITAL
ROOF...

--DEPOSITING HIM, FINALLY ON THE GARBAGE-STREWN
ASPHALT OF THE ADJACENT ALLEYWAY, AT THE FEET
OF... SAM SMITHERS.



WELL, BABY-- WHAT'S
THIS YOU'VE
BROUGHT TO
DADDY?

WHOEVER HE IS,
HE SURE DRESSES
IMPORTANT...
MIGHT EVEN BRING
AS HIGH A PRICE
AS--



UNNGH

CLUD

YOU ARE WEAPONLESS
NOW. I ADVISE YOU--

WEAPONLESS?
JUST 'CAUSE YOU
SEPARATED ME
AN' MY GUN?
NO WAY, SISTER!



NOT WHILE I CAN PRESS
A STUD ON MY NIFTY NEW
BELT BUCKLE--

OOOH--

--AND PELT
YOUR PRETTY
BODY WITH
A SPRAY OF
THORNS!



THEN, TOO, I ALWAYS GOT MY FISTS. AN' I'M
NOT ABOVE USIN' 'EM ON A WOMAN-- NOT IF
SHE FIGURES SHE'S TOUGH ENOUGH--



--TO TACKLE
THE
PLANTMAN!

THE DULL, HEAVY SLAM OF THE PLANTMAN'S BLOW... ADDED TO THE NEEDLE-SHARP STAB OF THE THORNS, HURLS THE CRIMSON-GARBED WOMAN OFF THE PRECIPICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS INTO THE MIND'S BLACK ABYSS.

IN TIME, THE EBON CURTAIN PARTS... FOR BOTH THE WOMAN AND THE MASTER MAGE.

BUT ALL EITHER SEES, AT FIRST, IS A BLUR OF GREEN.

THE WALLS OF THEIR PRISON.

THEN...

SO DR. STRANGE... IT APPEARS WE BOTH PURSUE CAREERS OUTSIDE THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE.

TANIA...?

KNOWN ALSO, IN MOTHER RUSSIA, AS... THE RED GUARDIAN.

I...SEE.

WELL... I SUPPOSE WE COULD DISCUSS THIS AT LENGTH, HERE AND NOW.

BUT I'D PREFER YOU ATTEND TO KYLE FOR THE MOMENT...

...WHILE I FREE US FROM...

...WHILE I...

...NOTHING! THE SPELL HAD... NO EFFECT WHATSOEVER! I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

PERHAPS FLIGHTLY LESS COLORFUL MEANS WILL PROVE MORE EFFECTIVE... MY BELT-BUCKLE BLADE...

BUT PLANTS-- ESPECIALLY THESE PLANTS-- ARE LIKE PEOPLE. THEY DON'T ENJOY BEING HACKED AT.



EYES OF OSHTUR!
TANIA, ARE YOU--?



BRUISED...
SHAKEN... BUT
OTHERWISE...
STEPHEN, WHAT
ARE WE GOING
TO DO? WHY
ARE WE BEING
HELD?

FOR
THAT
MATTER...

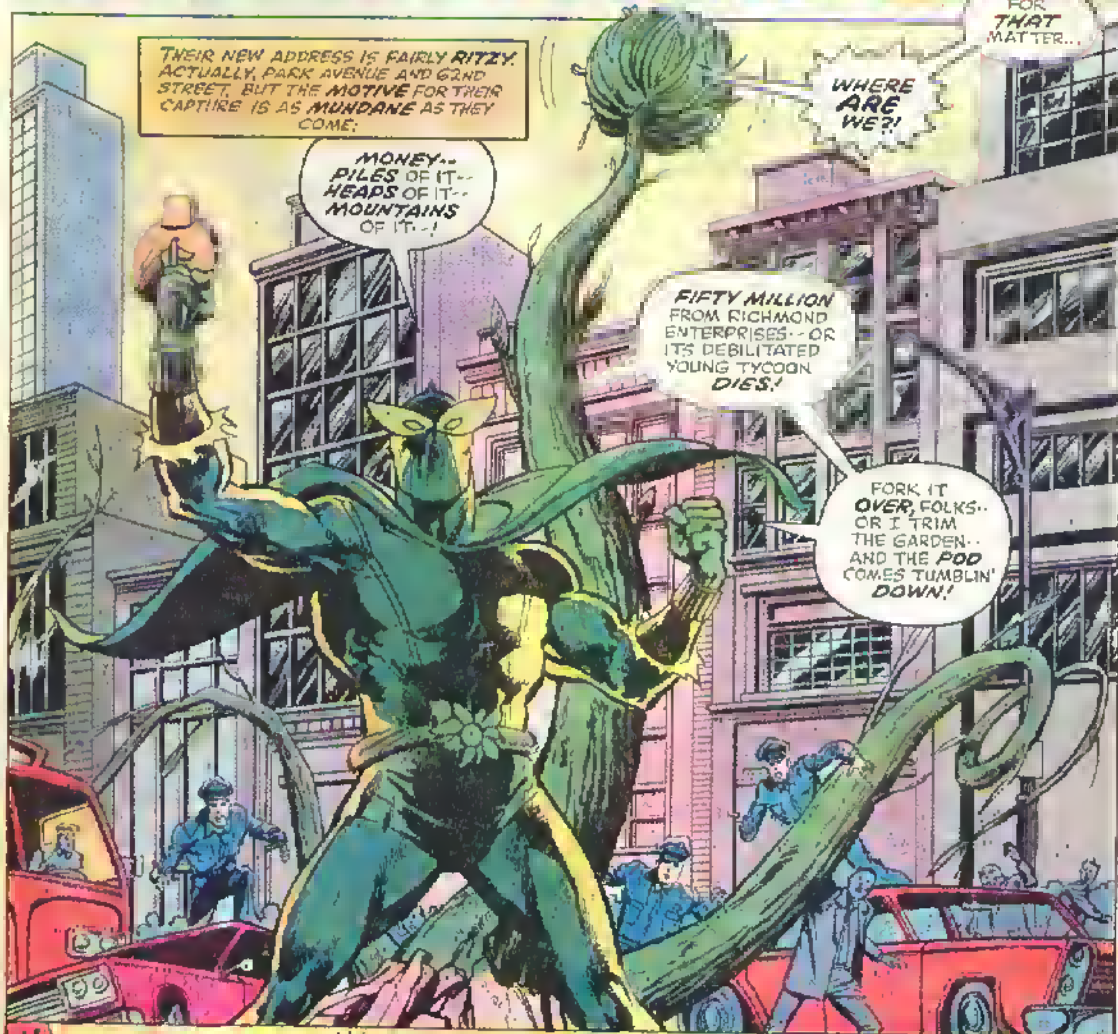
THEIR NEW ADDRESS IS FAIRLY RITZY.
ACTUALLY, PARK AVENUE AND 62ND
STREET. BUT THE MOTIVE FOR THEIR
CAPTURE IS AS MUNDANE AS THEY
COME:

MONEY--
PILES OF IT--
HEAPS OF IT--
MOUNTAINS
OF IT--!

WHERE
ARE
WE?!

FIFTY MILLION
FROM RICHMOND
ENTERPRISES-- OR
ITS DEBILITATED
YOUNG TYCOON
DIES!

FORK IT
OVER, FOLKS--
OR I TRIM
THE GARDEN--
AND THE POD
COMES TUMBLIN'
DOWN!



NEXT THE **EEL**, THE **PORCUPINE**, AND **POWER!**
MAN!